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Information Bulletin

• Grade 3 English Language Arts •

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Contents

Grade 3 English Language Arts Assessment	1
General Description.....	1
Description of Language Arts Assessment Standards.....	2
Acceptable Standard.....	2
Standard of Excellence.....	2
Part A: Writing	4
Reminders.....	4
Blueprint for Part A: Writing	5
Local Marking	6
Information for Teachers Participating in Central Marking.....	6
Scoring Guides	7
Part B: Reading	12
Development	12
Blueprint for Part B: Reading.....	13
Preparing Students for the English Language Arts Test	14
Suggestions for Preparing Students.....	14
Suggestions for Writing the Test.....	14
Part A: Writing	14
Part B: Reading	14
Learner Assessment Branch Contacts	16

Grade 3 English Language Arts Assessment

General Description

The Grade 3 English Language Arts assessment is composed of two parts—*Part A: Writing* and *Part B: Reading*.

- *Part A: Writing* consists of one writing assignment developed to be completed in 70 minutes. Teachers may want to consider using the 20-minute period directly preceding recess (10 minutes for discussion, 10 minutes for planning) and the 50-minute period directly following recess (drafting and revising). An additional 30 minutes may be taken to complete the test.

Students may use published dictionaries, including electronic dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries, and pictionaries, when completing *Part A only*.

Those students for whom a dictionary is a familiar reference tool are encouraged, but not required, to use a dictionary during the

editing phase of their writing. Use of a dictionary throughout the writing test may interfere with a student's ability to complete their story.

Students may do their writing using a computer. For information about using word-processing technology to complete the writing part of the achievement test, see the *General Information Bulletin, Achievement Testing Program, Grades 3, 6, and 9*.

- *Part B: Reading (Multiple Choice)* is developed to be completed in 60 minutes; however, students may take an additional 30 minutes to complete the test. The test consists of 40 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media. *Part B: Reading* is divided into two sections. Sections A and B each have several reading selections with corresponding multiple-choice questions. Students record their answers to all questions directly in their test booklets.

A short break should be provided between Section A and Section B.

Description of Language Arts Assessment Standards

The following statements describe what is expected of Grade 3 students who are meeting the *acceptable standard* or the *standard of excellence*, based on outcomes in the *Program of Studies*. These statements represent the standards against which student achievement is measured. It is important to remember that one test cannot measure all of the outcomes in the *Program of Studies*.

<i>Acceptable Standard</i>	<i>Standard of Excellence</i>
<p>Students who meet the <i>acceptable standard</i> are able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• retell a series of connected personal experiences as a narrative and tell stories from their own perspective. They use narrative formats on their own. These students use a writing style that generally holds the reader's interest.• use relevant but general details and/or ideas in their writing. They focus on important ideas related to a topic and arrange those ideas in a discernible order. These students provide a beginning and an ending that are connected to the ideas presented in the piece. They also compose stories following a basic story structure.• experiment with words and sentence structures to express their ideas and experiences. These students use words and expressions that are clear, although general rather than specific.• use complete sentences, with correct capitalization and end punctuation, most of the time. They spell many familiar words correctly and unfamiliar words phonetically.	<p>Students who meet the <i>standard of excellence</i> are able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• comfortably retell a series of connected experiences as a narrative and tell stories from their own perspective or from another perspective. They experiment with a variety of narrative formats. These students can express a unique experience and their own personality through their choice of topic, characters, actions, and specific language. They use a style that captivates and holds the reader's interest.• use specific details and/or ideas that are appropriate for achieving the purpose of the writing. They focus on important ideas related to a topic, and arrange them in a logical sequence without gaps in the presentation of information. These students begin their writing in an interesting manner and draw a conclusion that is related to the focus of the piece. They compose stories that incorporate setting, problem, characters, and resolution. They also experiment with dialogue in their writing.• experiment with words and sentence structures to express ideas and experiences. These students show control and variation in their use of sentence structure and choose specific words to create desired effects.• correctly use capital letters, periods, question marks, and exclamation marks. They produce correct spellings for frequently used words and apply their knowledge of common spelling patterns correctly when spelling unfamiliar words.

Acceptable Standard

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* are able to

- read and understand a variety of fiction and non-fiction materials that are commonly found in Grade 3 classrooms. They use the features of narrative/poetic and informational text to aid understanding. These students use their prior experiences, knowledge of language, and context clues in order to construct meaning from text. They recognize explicit relationships between events and characters in a story. These students also explore print and non-print sources to extend knowledge, retell key details or important ideas, and draw conclusions.

Standard of Excellence

Students who meet the *standard of excellence* are able to

- read and clearly understand an increasing variety of genres, including those that are not usual story forms. They use their understanding of the organizational structure and presentation of narrative/poetic and informational text to assist them as readers. These students draw on prior experiences, knowledge of language, and context clues in order to construct meaning from text. They understand explicit as well as implicit relationships between events and characters in a story. They also explore print and non-print sources to extend knowledge, to synthesize information, to draw conclusions, or to make judgements.

Part A: Writing

For *Part A: Writing*, students are given an illustrated writing prompt. The person who administers the test will read the test description, instructions, and the prompt aloud to the students.

Students will be given time to discuss the prompt with their classmates and teacher in groups of two to four students, or to think alone about it, and to plan their response before beginning to write their story.

The booklet for *Part A: Writing* includes a page for planning, followed by lined pages for writing.

The blueprint for *Part A: Writing* is given on page 5. Scoring guides are provided on pages 7 to 11. Teachers should discuss and use the scoring criteria with their students during the year.

Reminders

In order to facilitate valid and fair marking for all students during the July marking session, it is important for teachers to remember to

- follow the procedures for scribing papers, as outlined in the *General Information Bulletin*
- follow the procedures regarding classroom materials, as outlined in the *General Information Bulletin*
- have students plan their writing only on the page provided in the booklet
- not write anything in the booklets; for example, marks and rationales awarded at the school, spelling corrections or interpretations of words, and/or sentences written by their students.

Blueprint for Part A: Writing

The blueprint that follows outlines *Part A: Writing* of the Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test. The reporting categories are the categories under which summary data will be reported to schools and school authorities.

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
<p>*Content (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose)</p> <p>Students select appropriate details to describe events and characters. Events and/or actions should be plausible within the context established by the writer.</p>	<p>A writing prompt that will be read aloud to students and a picture to help stimulate the imagination of the students comprise the writing assignment. Students can organize their story ideas on the planning page provided.</p>	<p>The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:</p>
<p>*Organization (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole)</p> <p>Students organize ideas, events, and details in a coherent sequence.</p>		<p>Meets the <i>standard of excellence</i></p>
<p>Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively)</p> <p>Students use a variety of sentence types and structures appropriately.</p>		<p>Approaches the <i>standard of excellence</i></p> <p>Clearly meets the <i>acceptable standard</i></p>
<p>Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively)</p> <p>Students use words and expressions appropriately and effectively.</p>		<p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</p> <p>Clearly below the acceptable standard</p>
<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively)</p> <p>Students communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.</p>		<p>INS insufficient</p>

*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.

Local Marking

Classroom teachers will be able to mark students' writing, using scoring guides like those in this bulletin, before returning tests to Alberta Learning. Samples of students' writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will be provided with the test materials to support local marking. These samples are not to be shared with students until after the June administration of the test. Teachers have approximately two weeks from the scheduled administration date to mark their students' tests before returning materials to Alberta Learning. If teachers are also marking *Part B: Reading*, they are not to put any marks on the booklet. Additional marks may disrupt the machine-scoring process.

Marks awarded locally can be submitted to Alberta Learning and will be used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Learning as the second reading. Both marks contribute to the student's final mark. In case of a discrepancy between the two marks, papers will be adjudicated by a third reading that will determine the final mark that a paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual and group results can be reported.

Papers that are not marked locally by teachers will be marked centrally only once. At least once a day, all markers mark a copy of the same paper for inter-rater reliability. All papers will be marked centrally in Edmonton in July.

Information for Teachers Participating in Central Marking

The Learner Assessment Branch will contact superintendents in the spring for their recommendations of markers. The approximately 150 Grade 3 teachers selected will reflect proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta. To qualify for recommendation by a superintendent, a prospective marker must satisfy ALL of the following conditions:

- ☒ have a valid Alberta Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate
- ☒ have taught the course for two years or more
- ☒ be teaching the course in the current school year
- ☒ be employed by a school authority at the time of marking
- ☒ be able to mark on all scheduled days

Markers will be contacted in May, and the list of markers will be finalized no later than June 15. Group leaders will meet for one day before the marking session.

Each year, we have many more teachers nominated to mark than we have spots for marking. We must make sure that we have a balance of markers that reflects the student populations in various parts of the province. As well, we attempt to balance the representation of male and female markers, and of experienced and inexperienced markers. Unfortunately, not everyone whose name is submitted is selected.

The time allotted for marking is limited, hence markers are often asked to mark on Saturday and Sunday. The marking floor is open from 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., and markers are expected to be available to mark during those hours.

Content

Focus

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- relationship between events, actions, and the context (situation) established by the writer
- specificity of detail
- reader/writer relationship

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events, actions, and/or ideas are consistently appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are specific and consistently effective. • The writing captivates and holds the reader's interest.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events, actions, and/or ideas are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are specific and generally effective. • The writing engages and generally holds the reader's interest.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of the events, actions, and/or ideas are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are general and may be predictable, but are appropriate. • The writing generally holds the reader's attention.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the events, actions, and/or ideas are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are few and/or may be repetitive. • The writing does not hold the reader's attention.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are few events, actions, and/or ideas. • Details are scant. • The writing is confusing and/or frustrating for the reader.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.

Note: *Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the other categories.*

Organization

Focus

When marking **ORGANIZATION** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- beginning
- connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters
- ending

Meets the Standard of Excellence <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">5</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning captures the reader's attention, clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting, and provides direction for the writing. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are consistently maintained. • The ending ties events and/or actions together.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">4</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting and provides direction for the writing. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are maintained. • The ending provides an appropriate finish for events and/or actions.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">3</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning directly presents information about events, characters, and/or setting. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are generally maintained. • The ending is predictable and/or may be contrived but is connected to events and/or actions.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">2</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning may be confusing. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are unclear, missing, or inconsistent. • The ending is predictable and/or may be contrived.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">1</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning provides little information. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are missing. • The ending, if present, is unconnected to the events and/or actions.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the other categories.

Sentence Structure

Focus

When marking **SENTENCE STRUCTURE** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- writer's control of sentence structure
- presence of different sentence patterns and length

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is consistently controlled. • Sentence type and length are varied and effective.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is controlled. • Sentence type and length are usually varied and effective.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is generally controlled but may occasionally impede the meaning. • Sentences may vary in type and length.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is sometimes lacking control, and this often impedes meaning. • There is little variation of sentence type and/or length.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought units are difficult to recognize, and this severely impedes the meaning. • There is no variation of sentence type and/or length.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Vocabulary

Focus

When marking **VOCABULARY** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- quality of words and expressions
- specificity of words and expressions

<p>Meets the Standard of Excellence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used to create vivid images. • Words and expressions are consistently precise and effective.
<p>Approaches the Standard of Excellence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are descriptive. • Words and expressions are generally specific and effective.
<p>Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are clear. • Words and expressions are usually more general than specific.
<p>Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are basic. • Words and expressions may be repetitive.
<p>Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are simple and/or ineffective. • Words indicate a lack of vocabulary for writing.
<p>INS INSUFFICIENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Conventions

Focus

When marking **CONVENTIONS** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider

- end punctuation and capitalization
- spelling
- clarity

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End punctuation and capitalization are correct. • Most words, familiar and unfamiliar, are spelled correctly; spelling errors are understandable “slips.” • Errors that are present do not affect the clarity or effectiveness of communication.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End punctuation and capitalization are essentially correct. • Familiar words are spelled correctly; spelling errors are “slips”; unfamiliar words may be spelled phonetically. • Errors that are present rarely affect the clarity of communication.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventional end punctuation and capitalization are usually correct. • Many familiar words are spelled correctly; errors suggest uneven control of spelling rules; unfamiliar words are generally spelled phonetically. • Errors are sometimes intrusive and may affect the clarity of communication.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End punctuation and capitalization, when present, are inconsistent. • Many familiar words are misspelled and/or spelled phonetically. • Errors interfere with the clarity of communication.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is little, if any, evidence that the writer understands correct use of end punctuation and capitalization. • Words may be difficult to discern and are generally spelled phonetically. • Communication is not clear.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Part B: Reading

Part B: Reading of the Grade 3 Language Arts Achievement Test consists of 40 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media.

The blueprint showing the approximate number of questions in each reporting category appears on the next page.

Development

Reading selections are chosen according to the following general guidelines.

- Reading selections, whenever possible, should be relatively short but should be complete works containing a beginning, a middle, and an end.

- Reading selections should reflect the interests of the majority of Grade 3 students.
- Reading selections should be of appropriate difficulty for Grade 3 students.
- Canadian content should be used extensively.

The following considerations guide question development.

- Questions related to each reading selection should be arranged from specific to general, wherever practical.
- Questions should test the students' ability to understand and analyze the reading selections and to make judgements about their form and content. Only questions dealing with significant aspects of the reading selections should be asked.

Blueprint for Part B: Reading

The blueprint for *Part B: Reading* shows the reporting categories and language function under which questions are classified. The number of questions in each category is approximate.

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number and Proportion of Questions
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic	
Understanding Main Ideas/Details The student should be able to identify key details and main ideas, differentiate between main and supporting characters, recognize character motivation and explicit relationships between events and characters, and categorize ideas.	4	12	16 (40%)
Organization of Ideas and Relationships Between Form and Content The student should be able to identify genre (stories, poetry, plays, reports, and articles), organize features of story structure, use text and typographical features, recognize authors' techniques, and determine an author's purpose.	4	4	8 (20%)
Associating Meaning The student should be able to associate meanings of words, expressions, and literary devices from prior knowledge and contextual clues.	2	5	7 (18%)
Synthesizing Ideas The student should be able to draw conclusions by relating what is known to new information, and assess the plausibility of ideas and situations in literature.	3	6	9 (22%)
Number and Proportion of Questions	13 (33%)	27 (67%)	40 (100%)

Preparing Students for the English Language Arts Test

Suggestions for Preparing Students

The best way to prepare students for writing the achievement tests is to teach the curriculum well and to ensure that students know what is expected. Many of the skills and attitudes that support test writing are in fact good skills and strategies for approaching all kinds of learning tasks.

Teachers may also wish, however, to familiarize their students with the format of both *Part A: Writing* and *Part B: Reading* by working through the questions from achievement tests that are no longer secured. Following the administration of *Part A: Writing*, the Grade 3 writing prompt is no longer secure and may be used for practice purposes. Writing assignments and multiple-choice questions found in previous documents may also be used to prepare students for the upcoming achievement test.

The Learner Assessment Branch has published documents entitled *Samples of Students' Writing* (available through LRDC), which contain responses given on previous Grade 3 Language Arts achievement tests. Teachers may wish to share these samples with students to familiarize students with the scoring criteria that appear in this bulletin.

Teachers are also encouraged to share the following information with their students to help them prepare for the Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

Suggestions for Writing the Test

Part A: Writing

Have students:

Listen carefully to the instructions as they are read out loud and do what the assignment asks them to do. It is important

for them to read over the instructions and think about what they will write.

Talk about their ideas. Students will have a chance to share their ideas with some of their classmates and teacher. They should remember, though, that each student is to write his/her own story. Sharing ideas is just to help them get started.

Think about some of the things that make good writing, such as

- using important ideas that make sense together
- including details or describing events, characters, and their actions
- organizing ideas in an order that makes sense
- using words and sentences that help the reader understand what they want to say

Plan their writing. Students should make a plan that helps them organize their ideas. They may want to try a

- list (characters, setting, etc.)
- chart (beginning, middle, ending)
- web

Check their work and make any changes on their first draft.

Part B: Reading

Have students:

Read the material, using the strategy that works best for them. They may

- read the selection and think carefully about it before they try to answer the questions OR
- read the questions first and then read the selection, remembering the questions they need to answer
- underline in pencil key words in the selection or question to help them focus on what is expected. Students must refrain from making marks near the alternatives, other than filling in the circle of the answer they choose.

Read a selection more than once. It is all right for students to read a selection as many times as they need to in order to answer the

questions. Remind them to go back to the reading selection before answering each question.

Make sure they look at all types of information given. Information may be given in words, pictures, cartoons, or charts.

Make sure they read carefully all four choices before choosing the answer they think is best. All of the answers might seem

partly correct, but only one is the **best** answer. If they don't see a correct or best answer right away, encourage them to try to find two choices that make the most sense and choose one of them.

For further suggestions see *Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities*, Alberta Learning, Special Programs Branch, pages LD122 to 124.

ALL of the 2000 achievement tests are secured. The 1998 and the 1999 achievement tests are no longer secured and are posted on the Alberta Learning web site <http://ednet.edc.gov.ab.ca>.

Learner Assessment Branch Contacts

Mailing Address

Learner Assessment Branch
Alberta Learning
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton AB T5K 0L2

Telephone: 780-427-0010
Toll-free telephone connection: 310-0000
Fax: 780-422-3206
Alberta Learning web site:
www.learning.gov.ab.ca

Questions or comments regarding this bulletin should be directed to

Doug Burns
Assistant Director
Doug.Burns@gov.ab.ca

Renate Taylor Majeau
Grade 3 Assessment Specialist
Renate.TaylorMajeau@gov.ab.ca

